

Clean Winds of Change...

Smokers' last gasp is in the works

by K. Graham Bowers

Before long, smokers on campus may find their habit more restricted than it currently is.

The University's Occupational Health and Safety Co-ordinator, Gordon Weir, is currently soliciting input from staff and student organizations before recommending a new comprehensive policy on the issue.

At the moment regulations are inappropriately contained in the University fire regulations.

One option being considered is to prohibit smoking in all buildings on campus except in designated smoking-permitted areas, although Weir acknowledges that such action "may be a bit premature."

Already, in Lister Hall, 21 out of 31 floors are officially non-smoking, although in practice, at least one of these floors does allow smoking.

Weir has not yet received a response from the Students' Union or the Graduate Students' Association.

Students' Union President David Oginski admitted that the Students' Union has not acted on Weir's request for input, although the issue has been addressed at least in part.

Oginski pointed out that the back area of the executive offices is a no-smoking area, although smoking is still permitted in the reception area and individual offices.

Oginski also added that he supports the idea of designated smoking permitted areas rather than smoking-prohibited areas.

"I believe the University should have designated smoking areas. I believe that students and staff who

want to smoke should be allowed to, but at the same time those who don't want to be affected by others who smoke should not be. Common areas should be smoke-free."

This review follows a trend across North America to re-examine the question of smoking in public.

The United States Army now prohibits smoking and smokeless tobacco, except in designated areas. This ban includes all military vehicles and schools.

Also, commanding officers have the authority to order recruits to quit smoking while in basic training.

On January 1, The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company will become one of the first major North American Corporations to compl-

etely ban smoking in any corporate buildings.

Canadian smokers are also realizing the dangers of smoking. In 1970, 47 per cent of Canadian adults were smokers. In 1986 that number has dropped to 36 per cent. And AADAC reports that in 1983, the last year for which information is available, 75 per cent of all Canadian smokers tried to quit.

Still, "Canada ranks fourth in the world (in) per capita cigarette consumption behind . . . Cuba, Greece, and Cyprus," says a City of Edmonton Fire Department information bulletin.

Even the Canadian Judiciary is showing a change in attitude toward the habit.



In the recent case of Wilson vs. The Treasury Board, an employee filed a grievance claiming that the Treasury Board was in violation of the Dangerous Substances Safety Standards. These standards are incorporated into the workers' collective agreement.

His grievance was based on the fact that the Treasury Board permitted smoking in the workplace, thus placing him in danger by exposing him to second-hand smoke.

The grievance was upheld and the Canadian Government has appealed the ruling to the Federal Court.

Legislation in the form of city bylaws is also becoming more prevalent in Canada.

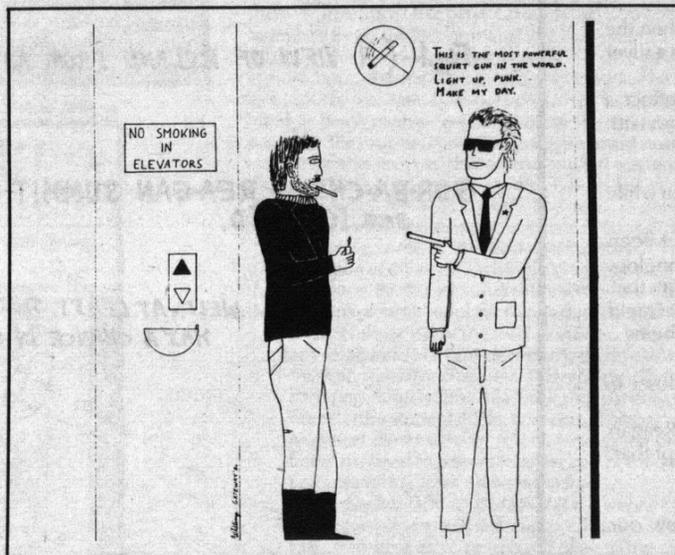
Edmonton was one of the first cities in Canada to enact a bylaw

regarding smoking in public. Vancouver and Toronto already had legislation in place when Edmonton passed its bylaw on January 13, 1981.

Edmonton's bylaw, which was based on Toronto's, has only been weakly enforced, however. The city's bylaw enforcement office reports that there have been ten convictions against businesses for failing to post the proper signs, and "at least two" convictions against individuals for violating the bylaw.

The most flagrant violation of the bylaw seems to be in ETS bus terminals.

Whatever conclusions are reached by Weir's review, today's message appears to be that a smoker's right to practise his/her habit is not as strong as a non-smoker's right to clean air.



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